

Message

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Sent: 3/27/2017 3:15:00 PM
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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips

US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
March 27, 2017

NWI Times - IDEM to distribute water filters to Superfund residents

Protesters oppose forced relocation in East Chicago

Chicago (Post) Tribune – 'There is injustice here': East Chicago residents protest emergency transfer

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/ide-m-to-distribute-water-filters-to-superfund-residents/article_1bd0c8bb-7c2b-5a3b-8a4f-6cc3490c8777.html

IDEM to distribute water filters to Superfund residents

- [Sarah Reese sarah.reese@nwi.com, 219-933-3351](mailto:sarah.reese@nwi.com)
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- Mar 24, 2017 Updated 16 hrs ago EAST CHICAGO — The Indiana Department of Environmental Management will provide water filters for residents of a Superfund site where the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently discovered elevated lead levels in drinking water, an IDEM spokesman said Friday.

The EPA began a cleanup of lead- and arsenic-contaminated soil from properties in zones 2 and 3 of the USS Lead Superfund site last fall, before East Chicago Anthony Copeland announced Dec. 8 the federal agency found elevated lead levels in a limited number of drinking water samples.

The lead in the soil is unrelated to the lead in the water, but residents exposed to both face cumulative health risks. Up to 90 percent of an estimated 11,000 water service connections in East Chicago could be lead, which can leach into drinking water. Because of this, residents should assume they have lead lines and use a properly certified filter, EPA said. Gov. Eric Holcomb said in a letter to East Chicago officials last week that providing water filters was a high priority. Holcomb on March 10 extended a disaster emergency in the city for 30 more days.

IDEM is still working out details regarding funding and distribution of the water filters, but hopes to begin the effort soon, spokesman Barry Sneed said. The filters are being provided "out of an abundance of caution," he said.

Quick action needed, groups say

Maritza Lopez, who lives in zone 3 and is a member of the East Chicago/Calumet Coalition Community Advisory Group, welcomed any assistance from IDEM.

"As a resident, I'm grateful they're doing it," she said. "Because right now everything that's been done has been done by the residents and outside organizations that have stepped in."

The CAG received 19 water filters March 4 from a Porter County organization called Project Neighbors and recently received another batch, she said. The CAG has been working to distribute those filters to the highest-priority households, including those with young children, pregnant woman or disabled seniors.

"Hopefully, IDEM comes in fast and they install it for us," she said.

The CAG and Community Strategy Group also have been working with different outside organizations to distribute bottled water, she said.

Mark Templeton, an attorney at the University of Chicago Law School's Abrams Environmental Law Clinic, said he and others working on behalf of residents were pleased to hear IDEM plans to provide water filters. Chapters

"We would urge them to act as quickly as possible on that," he said. "Obviously, the people who live in these zones have been experiencing the cumulative effect of lead contamination for years."

Templeton was among 17 attorneys, community groups and advocacy groups that recently signed on to a petition asking EPA to use its emergency powers to respond to drinking water problems in East Chicago. EPA said it received the petition and "will continue to work with the city and state to protect the health of East Chicago residents."

Families still living in the West Calumet Housing Complex in zone 1 of the Superfund site should be receiving bottled water, he said. Residents on Friday protested the looming forced relocation of more than a dozen families from the complex.

Anjali Waikar, an attorney with the Natural Resources Defense Council, said, "All residents of East Chicago, not just those living at the Superfund site, are at risk of toxic lead contamination through their tap water. Officials should provide a solution that doesn't ignore the rest of the city."

Samuel Henderson, an attorney with the Hoosier Environmental Council, said the news is encouraging. However, several questions remain unresolved, including what type of filters will be provided, how much money is available and how many filters will be provided per home.

IDEM also conducting more tests

EPA sampled drinking water as part of a pilot study to determine if excavation in the Superfund site would disturb service lines, causing lead to become dislodged and enter the water supply. Before excavation started, the agency found lead levels of 15 parts per million — its action level under the federal Lead and Copper Rule — at 18 of 43 homes where it conducted sequential testing.

EPA has since said it views the results in the Superfund site as representative of the city's entire water system and declined to conduct additional sampling, saying any results would confirm only what is already known.

IDEM is currently working with East Chicago to conduct further testing to ensure the city is in compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule, Sneed said. The city has been in compliance with the federal regulation since its inception in the early 1990s, he said.

Flint, Michigan, also was in compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule before outrage over elevated lead levels gained national attention.

IDEM will not be conducting sequential testing, which is more robust than sampling required under the Lead and Copper Rule, Sneed said. Samples will be taken at taps.

EPA has said it is considering revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule.

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/protesters-oppose-forced-relocation-in-east-chicago/article_93e9dc21-467f-545b-914b-cd2fde728b77.html

Protesters oppose forced relocation in East Chicago

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- Mar 24, 2017 Updated Mar 25, 2017
- EAST CHICAGO — Moving families from West Calumet Housing Complex to temporary housing at the end of this month "would be a disaster," Akeesha Daniels, a mother of three and lifelong East Chicago resident, told protesters Friday outside City Hall.

Daniels, who is slated to be moved to the Altgeld Gardens Homes on the Far South Side of Chicago as early as April 3, wants more time, she said, to find her children a safe place to stay.

"These are hard-working mothers who have put their lives on the line to take care of their kids, to keep them safe from any hurt, harm or danger," Daniels said. "Giving us and all of these women until June 28 would not hurt."

Daniels was among a group of protesters that handed off a letter to East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland's assistant on Friday, demanding local housing officials extend the move-out deadline to allow children to finish out the school year.

A second letter never made it into the hands of its intended recipient — East Chicago Housing Authority's executive director, Tia Cauley.

Cauley drove off in her vehicle after protesters swarmed her car Friday and the Rev. Cheryl Rivera with the Northwest Indiana Federation wedged the letter into Cauley's driver side window. The letter was later found on the ground.

The act was a "glimpse into the callousness and disrespect" that has allegedly been observed by residents over the past several months, Rivera said later.

Six East Chicago police officers arrived shortly after Cauley left to tell the crowd and media television crews to not block the parking lot's exit with camera equipment. The officers explained to protesters they had a right to be there, but they needed to allow cars to exit freely.

Families first learned in August they would have to leave West Calumet, but many have said finding secure housing has been difficult. The site, built in the footprint of a former lead smelter, is eyed for demolition.

While U.S. Housing and Urban Development counselors have been on site since last year, mobility counselors — an enhanced form of counseling that works closely with families to find homes in areas of opportunity — started on site Feb. 14 after delays with a subcontractor.

"All we are asking is give them an extension (through June 28). Bring in the relocation specialists to work. They just came in," said Maritza Lopez, a resident of the USS Lead Superfund site, where the complex is located.

But federal housing officials said this week they are moving closer to the ultimate goal of moving families from the West Calumet Housing Complex into permanent homes free of lead contamination.

"As incredibly unexpected and difficult as this move has been for affected families, families have done their part to make this process go as swiftly as possible under the circumstances. Most families received housing counseling early on and often," HUD said.

As of Thursday, about 67 families remain on site, according to HUD. Of those, 17 are in the process of moving into a new place.

Federal and local housing officials have said it's becoming an issue of health and public safety due to the lead in the soil and the high vacancy rates at the 346-unit complex.

Since 10-date relocation notices went out this week, other residents are finding permanent homes, meaning the families that have been assigned to units in Illinois may get a unit in town, HUD said this week.

"HUD's desire is that these families do not have to cross state lines if at all possible, but it will ultimately depend on how many units are available in East Chicago and how many families still remain onsite as we move closer to March 31," HUD said.

The city this week secured \$2 million to help with demolition costs from the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. A city attorney did immediately respond to questions Thursday and Friday about the mayor's plans for the West Calumet property and the estimated total cost for demolition.

The East Chicago Housing Authority, through its attorney, did not respond to requests for comment Thursday and Friday.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-east-chicago-relocation-protest-st-0325-20170324-story.html>

'There is injustice here': East Chicago residents protest emergency transfer

By Craig Lyons

March 24, 2017

Two letters demanding East Chicago city officials to delay the emergency transfer of West Calumet residents were prepared for delivery Friday.

One found its hands into Mayor Anthony Copeland's assistant after protesters rallied outside his [City Hall](#) office.

The second was left on the ground behind the East [Chicago Housing Authority's](#) Office — dropped after protesters slipped it into Executive Director Tia Cauley's window as her car pulled out of the parking lot and through a throng of protesters and West Calumet residents.

"There is injustice here," said the Rev. Cheryl Rivera, who attempted to pass Cauley the letter, and said the executive director's act further characterized "callousness" and "disrespect" shown to the residents forced to relocate because of lead and arsenic contamination.

East Chicago residents and activist groups protested the decision to start emergency transfers of the remaining residents at the West Calumet Housing Complex, which are set to start next week. Advocates have decried the process as it will upset the lives of the residents affected by lead and arsenic contamination, while officials from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development are assuring people the process will be smoother than it appears.

"They want out. But they want housing that is safe and comparable," Rivera said.

West Calumet resident Demetra Turner said she moved into the complex in May 2016 and by the time she finally settled in, she received the mayor's letter telling residents they had to move because of high levels of lead and arsenic in the soil.

On Tuesday, Turner received a letter saying that she'd be moved to an available unit in Chicago, a city she left more than 10 years ago because of violence.

"The violence in Chicago is staggering," Turner said. "That was 10 years ago. It's three times as bad now."

Turner and other West Calumet residents were told they'd be relocated to Chicago at the end of the month, but HUD officials said it's likely units will become available in East Chicago so people wanting to stay in Indiana won't have to leave the state.

HUD said 60 families received emergency transfer notices, with 30 families getting units in East Chicago and others in Illinois.

Since those notices went out, the 13 families slated to be transferred to Illinois could likely get a unit in East Chicago as other residents find permanent housing. Eight of those 13 will get a temporary unit elsewhere in East Chicago, according to HUD, but the remaining five might have to take a short-term unit in Illinois unless others open up.

"HUD's desire is that these families do not have to cross state lines if at all possible, but it will ultimately depend on how many units are available in East Chicago and how many families still remain onsite as we move closer to March 31," HUD said in a statement.

Residents can also appeal the unit they were assigned, HUD said.

For residents, it's not just where they'll get moved but a desire to keep their children in East Chicago schools with nearly two months left for the year.

"All we are asking is to allow us to be here until the end of the school year," Turner said.

Resident Akeeshea Daniels said she has one son in school and moving him at this point in the year would be detrimental to his education.

HUD said if families must temporarily relocate to Illinois, the East Chicago Housing Authority will provide free transportation so children can stay in their current schools.

"These people know they have to go," said Sherry Hunter, an activist with Calumet Lives Matter. "But it's all about their children."

HUD gave its approval for the East Chicago Housing Authority to begin emergency relocation by the end of March of the remaining families because of the high levels of lead and arsenic contamination at the complex, which is within the USS Lead Superfund site.

Officials agreed that the housing authority lacks the ability to keep the complex secure as residents move out, according to HUD, and that an adequate number of housing units were available to move people out of West Calumet.

The approval would give the East Chicago Housing Authority the ability to transfer West Calumet residents to other properties in East Chicago, Chicago and suburban Cook County, starting April 1, according to HUD officials.

HUD said after March 31, the East Chicago Housing Authority will begin moving residents to their new units. Contractors will move people's belongings the week of April 3.

"We want this policy rescinded," Rivera said.

The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority on Thursday approved \$2 million to assist with the demolition of the West Calumet Housing Complex.

"Our primary concern is the health and well-being of the individuals and families living at the West Calumet Housing Complex," said Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch, who serves as board chair of IHCD, in a statement. "Once they have each been safely relocated, these funds will go toward boarding up windows and doors, securing the property and demolition once it can begin."

Rivera said that \$2 million isn't enough to demolish the complex and safeguard the neighborhood.

"So what's the urgency?" Rivera asked.

Sincerely,

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